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AUTHOR Gomez, Mary Louise; Comeaux, Michelle A.
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ABSTRACT

Much of the literature concerning the challenges facing beginning teachers treats their problems as generic in nature. While researchers acknowledge the different problems encountered by beginning teachers, they often fail to take into account the varied knowledge, skills, beliefs, and dispositions which prospective teachers bring to their first years from their preservice teacher education programs. Further, many studies of beginning teachers are initiated in the fall of their first year of teaching; hence, they do not track the student teaching experience and novices' newly developed strengths and unresolved problems. This paper draws on data collected from eight student teachers who had completed programs of secondary English teacher education (four at a small midwestern liberal arts college and four at a large southeastern university). The discussion: (1) focuses on the student teachers' knowledge, skills, beliefs, and dispositions as they begin their first year of teaching; (2) speculates about the sorts of induction programs that would most benefit these teachers; and (3) poses questions, for those developing induction programs, that will move these programs to more constructivist positions. (Author/JD)

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National
Center for Research
on Teacher Education

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Mary Louise Gomez and Michelle A. Comeaux

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Abstract

Much of the literature concerning the challenges facing beginning teachers treats their problems as generic in nature. While researchers acknowledge the different problems encountered by beginning teachers, they often fail to take into account the varied knowledge, skills, beliefs, and dispositions which prospective teachers bring to their first years from their preservice teacher education programs. Further, many studies of beginning teachers are initiated in the fall of their first year of teaching; hence, they do not track the student teaching experience and novices' newly developed strengths and unresolved problems. In this paper, we (a) focus on the knowledge, skills, beliefs, and dispositions which eight student teachers bring from student teaching as they begin their first year of teaching; (b) speculate about the sorts of induction programs which would most benefit these teachers; and (c) pose questions for those developing induction programs which will move these programs to more constructivist positions.

START WITH THE STONE, NOT WITH THE HOLE: MATCHING NOVICES' NEEDS WITH APPROPRIATE PROGRAMS OF INDUCTION[1]

Mary Louise Gomez and Michelle A. Comeaux[2]

In recent years, researchers in teacher education have documented the challenges facing beginning teachers and their need for support (Bullough, 1987; Goodman, 1987; Grant and Zeichner, 1981; Little, 1984; McDonald, 1978; Veenman, 1984). Included in this literature are descriptions of programs focusing on support (Bolam, 1981; Bolam, Baker, and McMahon, 1979; O'Dell, 1986) and descriptions of programs focusing on support coupled with evaluation (Smith and Wilson, 1986; Stoddart and Feiman-Nemser, 1988), as well as philosophical statements regarding the role of support or mentor teachers (Anderson and Shannon, 1988; Gehrke, 1988; Thies-Sprinthall, 1986; Zimpher, 1988). At the same time other researchers have focused on the varied knowledge, skills, beliefs, and dispositions of prospective teachers (Borko and Livingston, 1988; Grossman, 1988; Gudmundsdottir, 1988; Tabachnick and Zeichner, 1984, 1985; Wilson, Shulman, and Richert, 1987; Zeichner, 1985).

While researchers acknowledge the different problems encountered by beginning teachers, they often fail to recognize the ways in which their preservice education programs affect the varied knowledge, skills, beliefs, and dispositions which prospective teachers bring to their first years of teaching. Many studies of beginning teachers are initiated in the fall of their first year of teaching, hence they do not take into account the outcomes of student teaching and other preservice education experiences. Missing to date in the research on induction-year teachers is the *connection* between the challenges novice teachers face and their program needs, and the strengths and unresolved problems that these new teachers bro ght with them from their preservice education years. The problems of beginning teachers are by no means generic (although many induction year programs treat them as such), but rather are idiosyncratic and arise from the experience of individual teachers in teacher education coursework and student teaching.

In this paper, our purpose is (a) to focus on the knowledge, skills, beliefs, and dispositions regarding writing and the teaching of writing with which eight student teachers will begin their first year of teaching; (b) to speculate about the sorts of induction experiences which would most benefit them; and (c) to pose questions for those persons developing induction programs which will move such programs to more constructivist

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[1]This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association in Boston, April 1990.

[2]Mary Louise Gomez, associate director of the Wisconsin Writing Project and assistant professor of curriculum and instruction, University of Wisconsin-Madison, is a senior researcher with the National Center for Research on Teacher Education. Michelle A. Comeaux is an assistant professor of education at Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minnesota. The two authors contributed equally to this paper.

positions.[3] We acknowledge that the preparation of teachers of writing is a challenge faced by teacher educators around the world; however, for the purposes of this paper we situate our case in the United States.

Methods and Data Source

This paper draws on data collected from eight student teachers, four of whom completed a program of secondary English teacher education at a small midwestern liberal arts college (here called Midwest College) and four of whom completed a program of secondary English teacher education at a large southeastern university (here called Southern University) in the United States.

Interviews were conducted with the eight students prior to the start and following the completion of the prospective teachers' student teaching experiences. Interviews were developed at the National Center for Research on Teacher Education at Michigan State University and examine the study participants' knowledge, beliefs, and dispositions in the following domains of teaching writing: subject matter and curriculum, students, teaching and learning, the teacher's role, and the classroom context.[4] Further, the interview was designed to explore how teachers' thinking interacts with their practices of teaching.

Data acquired from the interviews were then used to develop a portrait of each prospective teacher's knowledge, beliefs, and dispositions regarding writing and the teaching of writing. Each teacher's portrait was then examined in reference to four categories of support required by beginning teachers (Gomez, 1990): technical or procedural assistance (defined here as help required by a teacher to better execute instruction); personal support (that which responds to teachers' varying needs regarding their physical, mental, and emotional health); support for the development of curriculum; and support for challenging the accepted school curriculum. Categories of support were then reviewed in reference to the primary themes of induction models found in the United States and hypotheses drawn as to the match between beginning teachers' needs and induction programs' goals and content.

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[3]It is beyond the scope of this paper to describe and examine the epistemology of social constructivism. Moreover, like "reflection," the word has come to be used by groups with very different interpretations of its meaning as well as with very different agendas and philosophies. To us, however, the term "constructivism" implies an epistemology with the following characteristics: Learning is brought about through "invention and reinvention" (Freire, 1970) and accomplished in a social setting in which dialogue and sharing meaning takes place; knowledge is not fixed, but rather is fluid and subject to transformation; an individual's behavior is a function, not of rewards and punishments, but of how experiences are organized and made sense of; and reality is both individual and shared (Sigel, 1978).

[4]Data collected concerning the teacher education program and prospective teachers at Southern University was part of a large federally funded project investigating varied forms and outcomes of teacher education, e.g., alternate route, fifth-year postbaccalaureate programs, preservice undergraduate programs. The National Center for Research on Teacher Education at Michigan State University funded the data collection at Southern University as well as the development of the instrumentation used at both sites.

The English Teacher Education Program at Southern University

Prospective teachers at Southern University participated in a program of teacher education which required 36 hours of postbaccalaureate (in their case in English) course work, 2 three-week practica, and 10 weeks of student teaching. Typically, teacher candidates worked for two summers and one academic year to complete the program. Prospective teachers in all five subject matter areas (English, foreign languages, mathematics, science, and social studies) in the program enrolled together in a course entitled "Effective Teaching in the Secondary School." This course lasted half the semester and focused on the domains of the state's beginning teacher assessment program and the research in which it was grounded. Students listened to lectures, read and discussed expectations for teacher behaviors and learner outcomes, watched videotapes of teachers conducting state assessment-based lessons in various subject matters, and were tested on their knowledge of the various domains.

This course was followed in the second half of the semester by another in the special methods designed for the group of prospective teachers in each subject matter; the English methods course focused on "how" to teach writing and literature. The English teacher candidates read research concerning a process approach to teaching writing, planned lessons, and completed other assignments related to teaching literature and writing during the course (e.g., developing a file of 100 good activities for teaching English).

The prospective teachers also participated in two field experiences during the fall semester; one placement was made in a middle school and one in a high school. The two practica required that prospective teachers observe for the majority of their half-days in the classrooms and teach for one period per day for one week. The grade and ability level as well as the racial and cultural compositions of the classes taught in the practicum varied from teacher candidate to teacher candidate. Each experience lasted for three weeks.

In the spring semester of the year, the prospective teachers enrolled in one of two sections of a course entitled "Teaching Language and Composition" taught by program faculty. This course focused on "why" writing is taught; in it, the prospective teachers read more theory concerning the teaching of writing, wrote a research paper and a book critique, and kept a journal regarding the work of the authors read for the course. This course was taught in the evening as the prospective teachers were simultaneously completing 10 weeks of student teaching in a middle school or high school. As with the two practica, the prospective teachers varied in terms of grade level taught as well as by racial and cultural composition of the classes. Three intertwined themes mark this program of teacher education: (1) an approach to teaching writing emphasizing processes of drafting, revising, and publishing; (2) views of learners which emphasize differences in individuals' styles of writing; and (3) a focus on the domains of the state assessment system as a way of organizing curriculum and instruction.

The three secondary English faculty members held similar views concerning best practices in the teaching of writing. Two of the three had been involved in National Writing Project Staff development programs and all three advocated teaching writing which emphasized making writing enjoyable and downplaying features of correctness on students' drafts. Professor Slade represented the views of the faculty concerning the teaching of writing.[5]

> My belief about the teaching of writing [is] that writing is a process, that the process is teachable, that we need to be giving students positive opportunities to experience that process and not necessarily impose that as the only model of writing on students.

Teaching writing as a recursive cycle of drafting, revising, and publishing was elaborated upon in the program through readings, lectures, discussions, and faculty encouragement of the prospective teachers to bring their students' writing to class to share. The prospective English teachers at Southern University were very receptive to the ideas presented in their program and were generally very pleased with the opportunities for practice teaching they were offered. They were not, however, always successful in putting into practice the ideas they had learned in their classes, particularly with those students who were most unlike themselves (all four prospective teachers were white females in their twenties).

The Southern University Teachers

In his book *Stone Work: Reflections on Serious Play and Other Aspects of Country Life* (1989), John Jerome describes how he learned to build stone walls. Jerome first read "how to" manuals on wall building:

> These books tend to be brief, there being only so many ways to tell someone to put two stones on one, one stone on two. They are thorough, but as I discovered when I finally began putting actual stones in the ground, a little misleading. It is unavoidable: if you are sketching wall construction, you will sketch rectangular stones, cubic stones, shapes of stone that fit the principles you're trying to illustrate. You sketch rectangular excavations for footings, with vertical sides and level bottoms. That's what I dug. (p. 16)

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[5]The names of all prospective teachers, faculty members, and other school personnel, including cooperating teachers, are pseudonyms as are those of the college and university.

Yet, Jerome soon discovered that one must begin not, as he had been, with the digging of the hole, but with the stones themselves. He learned to accommodate the hole to the stone:

> When you put a stone in the ground, however, you want a hole that fits the stone, and that stone, I guarantee you will not have vertical sides and a level bottom. The task, therefore, is to describe, with your shovel, in the earth, the shape of the stone—not just in outline, but complete with its bottom contours, three dimensional. (p. 16)

While Jerome discovered this principle early in his wall building, as he was actually building a wall which did not "work," the Southern University teachers had little opportunity to test what they read and believed until the second semester of their teacher education program. Armed with bachelors degrees in English, they came to their program of English teacher education and learned about activities which could be used to teach a process approach to the teaching of writing.

They were good students; they enjoyed writing; they had kept journals as children and as young adults; and as future teachers, several still maintained journals for personal growth and professional understanding. Some wrote poetry, others wrote short stories, one conducted research with a faculty member in the summer and wrote and submitted journal articles concerning her work. They talked about writing as an activity which brought them understanding, pleasure, and rewards. Scarlett, for example, remembered two reports in fourth grade for which she received her teacher's praise. "I did illustrations and everything like that and [the teacher] liked that. . . . They were over 20 pages long . . . with all these illustrations. . . . " Years later, as a graduate student, Scarlett remained intrigued with writing as a life-enhancing activity. She talked of the importance of her journal.

> I truly think of it as a journal of the life and times of Scarlett. I think it's going to be helpful to look back on in [future] years to remember the things that happened to me and the feelings that I had. It expresses a lot of feelings about life. And I also use it for goals, things I want to get down, this and that. I also use it to throw around ideas that I have. It's kind of an all-purpose type journal.

The Southern University teachers entered their program of teacher preparation believing that writing was a life-enhancing endeavor and that all learners would want to and could acquire such skills. The importance of such dispositions towards learners has been noted as a critical factor in students' achievement (Brophy and Rohrkemper, 1981; King, 1980). Positive beliefs about all learners' ability to write are evident in the cohort group's responses to interview items. In the fall of their program of teacher preparation, the

prospective teachers were concerned that they would not have enough subject matter knowledge of English to teach their students adequately.

They noted deficiencies in their knowledge of grammar and of literature. Scarlett, for example, was worried that she did not always remember the proper labels for parts of speech. She was working through a college grammar handbook brushing up on this knowledge. Scarlett's peers were also concerned that they had inadequate subject matter preparation; Sheila, for example, was concerned about the adequacy of her background knowledge in literature. Sheila noted Renaissance literature in particular as her weak area:

> I have never taken a Renaissance literature class, for instance, but I think if I am aware and I stay a few steps ahead and I take the initiative to fill in those places that I will be okay, yet it is a concern.

At the beginning of their program, these teachers were anxious to be as prepared as possible to teach the breadth of the English curriculum. They assumed they would be called upon to demonstrate their understandings of grammar, literature, and composition. They anticipated they would need to take the initiative to remedy gaps in their subject matter knowledge. Whether staying one chapter ahead of one's students or "brushing up" on the terminology of grammar is sufficient to enable teaching about literature or grammar is open to dispute (McDiarmid, E[illegible] and Anderson, 1988). However, these responses to interview questions in the fall of their program demonstrate the prospective teachers' concern with their subject matter knowledge. The prospective teachers did not voice concerns about "how" to share that knowledge they were concerned about acquiring. Rather, they assumed interest on the part of the learners and were worried they would have enough and adequate knowledge to share.

By springtime, the prospective teachers had completed their special methods course and were simultaneously enrolled in an evening course elaborating their knowledge on the teaching of writing and were student teaching. Their concerns were changing from those focused on their own subject matter preparation to their problems of discipline and classroom management. Sheila's comments are representative of those of her peers concerning these issues:

> Well, I guess we were, or I was expecting a cooperative audience. . . . The thing I hadn't expected was having to stop things and discipline or the fact that some things just wouldn't go over and that the students wouldn't like it, wouldn't understand it.

Sena, too, bemoaned her inability to manage the classroom:

> No program prepares you for what goes on in the classroom today. My mother sat in on one of my classes. . . . She was absolutely astounded at the lack of discipline and the just gall . . . some of the students have over what my mother considered a teacher, an authority figure. I'm smarter than that, I know I have no authority in the classroom. But, she was appalled and frankly, I was kind of embarrassed that the kids basically take over whenever they want to. And with 30 kids, you've got 30 different discipline problems in one classroom at any one time. In no more than 5 minutes [of lecture] there will be 5, 10 interruptions.

The prospective teachers had not expected to teach learners who were uncooperative or uninterested in learning. They were puzzled and frustrated by teaching groups of students who were difficult to manage. Neither the suggestions of their faculty nor their own past personal experiences with writing appeared successful in increasing their low-tracked learners' motivations or skills in writing. Just as John Jerome had, at first, built stone walls which did not stand, these student teachers created curriculum which was not successful. Jerome had initially dug holes in locations and sizes of his choice, without regard for the individual stones. He had not understood the principle that one worked the stone, its sizes and contours, to determine the sort of base hole to dig and the delicate balance in which to lay one stone upon another to form a line of such strong, interdependent links.

So too, the Southern University teachers brought information to their task—teaching. They, too, had a purpose, to share that information they enjoyed with students. Like Jerome, they read manuals; they also enrolled in course work regarding "methods" to learn how to communicate their knowledge of writing to students. Like the wall builder with his stones, they created, without reference to the characteristics and interests of the learners, a box of 100 activities to teach English. They found that failure to take into account the characteristics and interests of the students they taught led to difficult to manage and uninterested learners. Rather than reexamine their teaching, like Jerome the wall builder, the prospective teachers, for the most part, blamed their "stones"—that is, their individual students, for their failure to fit the "holes," the curriculum, they had crafted.

Three of the four prospective teachers, Scarlett, Sena, and Stephanie, perceived the less privileged socioeconomic status of many of their students (also the fact that some were enrolled in the low track in their schools) as indicative of students' deficits. A fourth teacher, Sheila, made fewer judgments about her students based on criteria of socioeconomic status (perhaps because as a child and young adult, she had been an outsider in terms of religious preference in a community where she was marked by that status) and questioned her own teaching more and students' status less as a factor in their achievement. The prospective teachers examined the life experiences of the low-tracked learners in their classes and found them deficient. Stephanie, for example, spoke about the social class differences between students which are important to consider when planning for teaching.

> Social class you have to consider [because] maybe someone from a lower class had not been exposed to as many outside experiences during the course of their lifetime. Like maybe they haven't been to Paris to see all the museums and cathedrals and such and so when you talk about it, they don't have any idea. You would have to provide more background information and more visual material, things like that. You have to think more about enhancing your lesson plan in order to accommodate for that. So I don't see it as any special chore or something like that.

When asked about differences that are important to consider in teaching writing, Stephanie also focused on the deficits of lower socioeconomic status students.

> The kind of school system [they came from] . . . did they have a good background and things like that. Their social class, have they been exposed to good literature, what a piece of good writing looks like, have they read it before.

Stephanie explained that low socioeconomic status students would not have been exposed to good writing because "they haven't seen their parents reading in the home as much because their parents have to spend more time at work, that kind of thing." Stephanie believed that the poverty of her students' families had left their parents with insufficient time to provide the preparation for the literary and cultural experiences she and her classmates and other teachers required for school success.

The teachers also projected the future life occupations of their low-tracked students. Since their students' economic futures looked bleak, tied to low-status, semiskilled or skilled-labor employment, the teachers tailored their English curriculum to "practical" activities of writing which students would later need to compete for jobs. While talking about a group of young Black men in her classes, for example, Sena typified the beliefs of her peers regarding the needs of low-tracked learners of color:

> I want to be able to give them the skills that they think they need and they will practically need, as most of [them] aren't going to go into college, but the Air Force and the Army and [the service] wants most of these boys and you have to prepare them for the professional military exam they have to pass.

Sena explained that she would not work on certain types of writing with these students as her predictions for their future required particular skills:

> I wouldn't work on abstract themes, things they couldn't touch and feel, intangible elements. I don't think there's any need for a student who's a skills

> kid, who has a job at night and comes to school during the day to discuss freedom in the Soviet society. He knows what all this is about without actually having to write abstractly about it. I wouldn't have him make five-paragraph essays solely for the purpose of writing. I wouldn't make them do research papers. I wouldn't make them tell me in the vein of the research paper where they got all their information from.

The outcome of Sena's analysis of her students' needs led to her design of writing curricula which fit her vision of her learners' destinies.

Further analyses of the data suggest that the teachers found ways to blame others for their students' deficiencies; families, not schools or societal forces, were to blame for learners' low motivation and weak skills. Sena, Stephanie, and their peers found a commonsense explanation for their students' failures and also created a curriculum they believed would benefit these same students. They began endorsing curriculum with a life-skills orientation as well as one which filled in the gaps about cultural activities they believed were important and the students had not yet experienced. Such curriculum did fit the state's curriculum standards for three tracks of learners, "skills," "regular," and "honors," yet it did not acknowledge or honor the experiences students brought to school.

While the prospective teachers seemed satisfied with their explanations and proposals, they failed to see their plans were unlikely to increase students' motivation or assist students in moving beyond the type of employment for which the teachers predicted they were headed. In Jerome's words, these teachers continued to dig holes without reference to the stones. Like the novice wall builder who did not attend to the shape and size of his materials and consequently built a wall that would not stand, the novice teachers failed to take into account what their learners brought as skills and interests to school. The outcome was a curriculum which neither interested nor served the students well and a group of novice teachers whose skills of management were tested daily.

The English Teacher Education Program at Midwest College

Because of the liberal arts philosophy and policy of Midwest College, prospective secondary education teachers there do not major in education, but rather in their field of concentration, such as English, history, or physics. If they seek teaching certification, they must enroll in the education department and take a prescribed program that will lead to certification, while still taking all the same courses as those content area majors not enrolled in education. All students in the secondary education program take the same sequence of courses beginning their sophomore year, including psychological foundations, social foundations, special needs children, reading in the content areas, and a 4-week practicum, Career Orientation to Teaching. Prior to a 10-week block of student teaching, students also

take two courses offered in a 3-week block, General Methods of Instruction, and Special Methods in their chosen content area.

The General Methods course usually has 12-16 students enrolled in it from all the various content area majors and is taught by a full-time member of the education department. The content centers on those topics considered to be "generic" such as cooperative group learning, test construction, classroom management, or questioning techniques. The class meets for approximately 24 hours, some of which is spent having students microteach to their peers while being videotaped. Each student later watches the videotape with a peer and together they critique the teaching episode. The instructor's goals for the course include fostering prospective teachers' habits and skills of reflective thinking, as well as emphasizing a collaborative approach to teaching.

The Special Methods in English course is taught each Spring in the evening by an adjunct faculty member, Mrs. Smith, a high school English teacher who has a master's degree in education. In the approximately 12 hours the class meets, she covers the teaching of writing, literature, speaking, and listening. When teaching the "how to teach writing" portion of the course, Mrs. Smith emphasizes a process approach that includes the stages of prewriting, writing, and revising. She frequently uses her own students' papers to give the prospective teachers experience in evaluating writing. She also encourages prospective teachers not to teach grammar as a separate subject but rather to include it in writing exercises and the evaluation of students' work. Although she occasionally uses peer response groups in her high school classroom, she is skeptical of them because she finds "students don't like to criticize each other and they say only positive things."

In contrast to students at Southern University, prospective teachers in English at Midwest College have considerably less time in special methods and proportionately less time in how to teach writing (generally six hours or less). Nor do they receive much instruction in either the research literature or practice of "effective teaching" in their General Methods course; this is due, in part, to the fact that the state has no beginning teacher assessment program that is based on such literature and to the educational philosophy of the instructor.

The Midwest College Teachers

Like their Southern University counterparts, the four Midwest College teachers—Sarah, Sandra, Nancy, and Leslie—were white females in their early twenties. And like their counterparts they were also good students who looked forward to teaching the subject they loved the most. They differed, however, in that while they were English majors, they had no "file box of 100 activities" for teaching writing; in fact, they had little preparation in teaching writing at all. This proved to be especially problematic for Sarah, Nancy, and Leslie, who struggled with ways to teach writing. They had all received minimal information

from their methods teacher about how to teach writing as a process and the stages of prewriting, writing, and revising but lacked knowledge of specific ways to enact that approach. Sandra, in contrast, had tutored in the Writing Lab at Midwest College and had received some instruction for that position as well as much experience while she worked there. For her, teaching writing was a problem only in that her approach did not always agree with that of her cooperating teacher, a situation she put up with good grace while she managed to find ways to teach that did not uncomfortably compromise her philosophy.

Leslie's lack of preparation for teaching writing was noted both by herself and by her cooperating teacher, Mrs. Steen. Early in her student teaching, Leslie noted in her journal,

> I do need to start thinking about how I'm going to teach writing in my classes. I realize that I have no idea of what I'm going to do. I have so much to consider—organization, grammar, style, etc. I still have a lot to learn! I want my students to enjoy writing and to realize that it is an important mode of communication, public or private. This is my main philosophy of writing. The way I teach will center around it.

Throughout our interviews, Leslie frequently mentioned that she did not know the answers to some of the questions put to her because "I've never had to teach writing." Although she had a great deal of experience in writing herself and enjoyed it, she wished that she knew more about how to teach it. When asked, "Is there anything you wished you knew more about in order to teach writing?" she replied,

> Oh, everything! While I've had a lot of experience *writing* papers . . . I don't feel like I know enough about how to teach writing. In any aspect. I suppose I could read how-to books. I wish I would have had a class here, a class of teaching how to teach writing. Instead of just taking writing courses. I don't know if there are any workshops available ever for teachers. I probably would consider attending those and getting ideas from other people. Find out how they do it. And what's worked for them. The only other way I can think of is through experience. You know once I get going, I may be able to figure out something that works for me.

Leslie's lack of preparation for teaching writing was not noted just by Leslie herself. Even though Leslie turned out to have a successful 10 weeks of student teaching in terms of her overall performance, her cooperating teacher, Mrs. Steen, commented in her evaluation that, "[Leslie's] weakness appears to be a lack of specific and varied strategies for teaching literature and writing, which I feel is more a result of the college program which lacks specific methods instruction." Mrs. Steen did work with Leslie to strengthen her weak skills in teaching writing, but Leslie left the student teaching experience, for the most

part, as she entered it, still lacking strong evidence of a coherent approach to teaching writing.

Like Leslie, Sarah also went into her student teaching poorly prepared to teach writing. Throughout our interviews, Sarah frequently had trouble answering the questions or gave confused, wandering answers. For example, when asked why she would try a certain strategy, she comments, "I don't know . . . ummmm . . . I don't know. I just would." When asked what she would do to address a student's difficulty with paragraph organization, she answered, "Just go and work on them." She notes that in response to a student's poorly written essay, she'd be tempted to "put these sentences together and make a whole bunch of red marks."

Sarah's lack of knowledge of how to teach writing was exacerbated by her own dislike of writing, which may stem from her feeling that she doesn't write well. Unfortunately, she was placed with a cooperating teacher, Mrs. Lind, who admitted to Sarah during one of Sarah's first visits with her that she had the same problems. Mrs. Lind's teaching of writing consisted solely of allowing students to write for extra credit on an exam and occasional paragraph discussion of a short story. Mostly she taught "writing" through daily grammar exercises from a basic grammar textbook, a practice which Sarah imitated throughout her student teaching.

Sarah's experience teaching writing during student teaching was limited and included only two paragraphs she assigned, related to short stories the students had read. In evaluating and discussing these paragraphs, she stressed mechanical features, such as the use of commas, and made no attempt to include prewriting or revising activities. This is not surprising, given that in our interviews she stressed the importance of teaching "basic mechanics." Like Leslie, Sarah left student teaching still with little knowledge of how to teach writing.

In contrast to Sarah, Nancy loved to write and, in fact, asked her General Methods teacher if she would read a 22-page story she had recently written for children just "for the fun of it!" When questioned before she began her student teaching, Nancy frequently was unsure of how to answer questions and noted that she did not know what some of her practices and policies would be, such as evaluating students' written work. However, she knew what she *didn't* like and that included the writing process as she understood it. This dislike stemmed from her experiences with her own writing.

> I never sit down and write a rough draft. What I do is I sit and think and think and think a lot before I ever start to write. Cause I don't like to leave it there on paper when I know I'm going to change it. So I do a rough draft, but not on paper, I guess . . . in high school I was taught that you tried to do a rough draft yourself, and you had to go over it the next day with a partner or a group, then revising and then the final draft, you know, proofreading and

> all that kind of stuff. And I never cared much for it, so I don't know. I've been thinking about that, because I have to teach these 7th graders writing this next semester and, I don't know what my approach is, but I don't like that one! It never inspired me to do anything but get by. Especially when they'd lay it all out for you . . . in this paragraph do this, then this, then this. Well, it's just filling in the blanks really.

Nancy does admit that she doesn't know if her way of writing is applicable to the general student populace.

During her student teaching, Nancy taught writing, usually in the context of a literature unit, and would have students do rough drafts. However, she would read the rough drafts and would "just circle mechanics." Students then had the chance to hand in another, "corrected" draft. With the draft "corrected," Nancy would then read the writing for content. Nancy felt that her cooperating teacher, who allowed her to do what she wanted in the classroom, "had good ideas about helping kids learn to write." From her, Nancy picked up some strategies such as using students' work as the context for teaching grammar and teaching students how to organize an essay. She also learned from her cooperating teacher how to structure peer groups so that they were productive and not off-task. Nancy's strategies and skills in teaching writing increased dramatically as a result of her student teaching. However, it was unclear if she had just added to her mental box of "100 activities to teach writing" or if she had actually changed her *understanding* of how to teach writing.

Like the Southern University teachers, Sarah, Leslie, and Sandra frequently bemoaned their problems with classroom discipline and worried about how they were ever going to "control" their classes. Nancy alone seemed to find no problems with her classes' behavior and was described by her cooperating teacher as having "excellent classroom control . . . students responded positively to her classroom management, which included a sense of humor." Her success may be attributed, in part, to her exemplary skills in handling classroom discussions, a strength noted by all who observed her. She was unusually talented in drawing unmotivated or withdrawn students into the discussion and used excellent questions that elicited many responses from class members.

Sarah, Sandra, and Leslie all experienced repeated problems with students who were disruptive (some to the point of swearing loudly in class or making obscene noises). Those prospective teachers focused on discipline problems, more than anything else in their journals. Leslie noted early in her student teaching, "It certainly is tough to keep a class of 28 rambunctious ninth graders quiet and working. . . . Their enthusiasm needs to be directed in the right direction." With the help of her cooperating teacher and supervisor, however, as well as her own persistent seeking out of solutions to behavior problems, Leslie was able

to gain control over the 10 weeks and demonstrated considerable growth in classroom management skills.

Sandra and Sarah chose to focus on creating and testing a classroom management system for the action research project required of them by their secondary education supervisor. Both plans were variations of an assertive discipline approach and helped the student teachers gain some control over their classrooms. Sandra, who had two ninth-grade "classes from hell," created new seating charts for her classes and a system of "points" that could either be awarded for good behavior or taken away for bad behavior. She described the reaction to her plan in her journal:

> When I first started this system, the students were very against this. They complained and whined about the new system. After the initial shock wore off, the "testing" period started. The students tested me to find out how serious I was. The first few days using this system, I was giving warnings left and right. After each warning, students would "ooh" and "ahhh." However, after one student was "excused" from class, they realized I was serious, and my classes only had minor problems with discipline and control again. . . . Once I had control of the classroom, I was able to effectively teach my students. By creating an environment conducive to learning, my skills as a teacher were enhanced, and the students were able to concentrate and learn.

While Sandra was able to "troubleshoot" effectively the problems she was having in such a way that her classroom goals were met and she could teach as she wished, Sarah met with less success. Her problem students were less flamboyant than Sarah's, whose students liked to shock her with their swearwords and sexual slang, but nonetheless their constant chatter and inattention made it difficult for Sarah to concentrate on her teaching. She first attempted to ignore the behavior but later worked out a plan that included a list of rules the students were to follow, such as "Raise your hand before talking; listen without talking when others are speaking." If the students made it through the class period without breaking the rules, they were rewarded with five minutes of free time at the end of the hour to talk quietly amongst themselves. Sarah found this plan to be effective when she enforced it; however, she was frequently inconsistent in her application of the plan and therefore allowed students to subvert or divert her instruction.

Sarah, Sandra, Leslie, and Nancy all chose to do their student teaching in schools that were similar to the high schools they had attended. For example, Sarah graduated from a small rural high school with a graduating class of only 60. The rural school in which she student taught had an average graduating class of 50. Similarly, Leslie attended a large suburban, predominantly white high school and student taught in a neighboring suburb, also predominantly white. Thus, these student teachers had few experiences with diverse students. Their answers to questions concerning the teaching of writing to ethnically and

culturally diverse learners demonstrates they had given little thought to such challenges. For example, when asked whether she would alter her instruction in teaching the use of apostrophes if her students were Black, Leslie replied,

> Umm . . . I don't think so . . . I guess I've never, I've never had the experience of, of teaching, or being with a large number of Black people. So, I don't really know exactly what the problem would be with them. I can't imagine that it would be anything different.[6]

Consideration of differing learner characteristics was rarely mentioned in the student teachers' interviews or journals. It was as if they assumed that all students were similar to themselves or those they had known in their high school years. This affected their teaching of writing in that they frequently assumed that whatever problems they experienced in writing would also challenge their secondary school students. For example, when talking about teaching organization in writing to students, Leslie commented, "I don't think there'd be too much problem with it. I didn't see too much of a problem when I was in high school." She also remarked that she would anticipate her students having trouble with verb tense because "that is a problem I know I have had when I've been writing and I think that's something I would need to watch out for."

Discussion and Implications

The induction of novice teachers into the teaching profession is an issue of concern for the following reasons: First, there is a high dropout rate of novices from the teaching profession. Approximately 15 percent of new teachers leave the profession after the first year and nearly 30 percent are estimated to leave the profession by the close of their second year (Schlecty and Vance, 1983). Forty to fifty percent of teachers abandon the profession in the first seven years after graduation and two-thirds of these leave in the first four years (Huling-Austin, 1989). Of further concern is some evidence that the most academically talented new teachers leave the profession in the greatest numbers (Schlecty and Vance, 1981).

Second, those who currently teach are not adequately meeting the needs of the growing numbers of students who are low-income, nonwhite, and from non-English language backgrounds (Hispanic Policy Development Project, 1988; Kennedy, Jung, and Orland, 1986; Romero, Mercado, and Vazquez-Faria, 1987). Poverty, living within a single-parent family,

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[6]Here our point is to highlight these prospective teachers' lack of consideration that students unlike themselves may require different teaching strategies from which the teachers had benefitted. We recognize that controversy currently exists regarding the best practices in teaching writing to learners who are culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically different than their white middle-class counterparts in schools in the United States. Our purpose is not to debate these arguments, but rather to show that these prospective teachers failed to consider issues of race, class, and language in relation to their teaching of English.

and limited English proficiency are key variables contributing to the high secondary school dropout rates of U.S. students of color. Of students who were enrolled as sophomores in public secondary schools in 1980, 12.2 percent of Whites had dropped out by the autumn of 1982 while 17 percent of Blacks had dropped out, 18 percent of Hispanics, and 29.2 percent of American Indians had left school (Wheelock and Dorman, 1989). These students' failures cannot be solely attributed to classroom experiences since complex cultural and economic webs bind people and their life chances and choices. Yet, the opportunities to learn and achieve in U.S. schools must be changed and expanded if schooling is to play a role in increasing all children's social and economic chances and choices in the United States. These challenges will continue to escalate as estimates of the growth of the nonwhite school population include a rise from 24 percent in 1976 to 30-40 percent in the year 2000 (Center for Education Statistics, 1987a, 1987b). New teachers require support and challenges to their thinking and methods in order to meet the needs of the changing population of students in our schools.

Given the common needs of the teaching profession and the growing population of diverse learners in U.S. schools—retention and more effective performance in classrooms—what goals do induction programs have? In an analysis of the conceptual frameworks undergirding the models of assistance provided to new teachers, Cooper (1990) outlines four focal orientations to induction year programs: (1) an idiosyncratic survival-response framework in which teaching and teacher are conceptualized as individualistic with a particular novice's needs forming the basis of the mentor teacher's response; (2) a technical instrumental framework grounded in a positivist tradition, which emphasizes the salience of observable teacher behaviors; (3) a complex intellectual framework, a model grounded in the constructivist epistemology tradition, which emphasizes reflection and principled action; and (4) a conceptually eclectic, concerns-oriented model which highlights teaching and teachers in relation to categories of concerns which emerge as teachers live through distinct, sequential, linear stages.

In a text recently published by the Association of Teacher Educators, Huling-Austin (1989) and O'Dell (1989) list goals commonly found in programs of induction; these authors highlight the attention of most induction programs to a technical-instrumental framework. The emphasis in these lists of induction program goals includes attention to (a) that which we call technical or procedural, for example, to improve the teaching performance of novices and reduce common problems of beginning teachers; and (b) personal support, for example, to promote novices' personal well-being. Some attention is also given to a category we call support for the development of curriculum, for example, to support the knowledge and skills of beginners. There is also a tacit emphasis in these lists of induction program goals on novice teachers fitting in to existing school cultures and norms. For example, Huling-Austin (1989) lists a common induction program goal as that of transmitting "the culture of the

school and the teaching profession" (p. 6) to beginners. O'Dell (1989) also notes a common concern of induction programs as that of integrating "beginning teachers into the social system of the school, the school district, and the community" (p. 21). While novices in any profession, or workers in any context must, to some extent, become a functioning member of the workplace culture, we question such an emphasis on acculturation to existing school norms when schools are failing to reach and teach such large numbers of U.S. students. Rather, we suggest that novice teachers need support to challenge the curriculum and prevailing norms of schools so that they might attempt new strategies which they have developed or which their teacher colleagues and/or faculty in their teacher education programs suggested were effective instructional practices.

Further, we suggest that novice teachers must (like those whom they teach) be welcomed into classrooms as persons who come with strengths as well as unpolished or weak skills. A constructivist induction program, such as that illustrated by Cooper's (1990) third model—the complex, intellectual framework—asks *not only*, "What common problems does this novice exhibit and how might she fit within our existing support system?" *but also* "What strengths, special skills, interests, or talents does this novice bring and how might we build on those to bridge her gaps in knowledge, weaknesses in skills, or racist or classist dispositions?"

What sorts of induction programs would benefit the students from Southern University and Midwest College? Would the goals which Huling-Austin (1989) and O'Dell (1989) list as common themes of programs of assistance for beginning teachers be beneficial to these novice teachers? First, as Veenman (1984) and others, for example, O'Dell, Loughlin, and Ferraro (1987), point out, classroom management skills remain a priority for many new teachers, including those from Southern University. These teachers were relatively confident about the knowledge of English they brought to their teacher education program, although they individually recognized varying "gaps" in their knowledge base. They also noted with pleasure the numerous "good" activities for teaching English they learned about in their program.

Yet, when faced with classes of learners unlike themselves—former motivated Advanced Placement English students in high school—they were, for the most part, unable to apply the strategies concerning a process approach to teaching writing they had learned in their methods courses and/or to apply the files of activities they had developed for teaching. Instead of questioning themselves, their methods, their beliefs, or their dispositions, they blamed the students for their lack of interest and low skills. Scarlett, Sena, and Stephanie failed to challenge themselves as a potential cause of the students' failure in English class.

Although, on the surface of practice, the Southern University teachers require assistance on classroom management, programs for beginning teachers which stress

management techniques or procedures will not serve these new teachers well. While they were uncomfortable with their skills of management and the students' behavior, the prospective teachers from Southern University appear to require a more constructivist version of beginning teacher assistance; that is, Scarlet, Sena, Sheila, and Stephanie knew what to expect from and how to respond to learners like themselves. They did not require more file cards or lists of activities to share with students. Rather, they appeared to require more time-intensive opportunities to think through why the multitude of strategies they brought to student teaching did not work with particular learners. There are few recipes or checklists which can aid teachers with problems which stem from their visions of who learners are, the reasons for students' academic and socioeconomic plights, and the particular destinies that appear to lie before specific groups of persons.

Further, enculturating teachers, who lack understandings of the position of students from families of low socioeconomic status and with non-English language backgrounds, into the ongoing and taken-for-granted life of the school and community (which tacitly accepts such student differences as a sociocultural given) will neither build teachers' skills nor assist them in building student achievement. The prospective teachers from Southern University appear to require assistance in reexamining their own classroom goals and purposes as well as their methods of teaching in reference to diverse populations of learners. Such activities cannot occur in prepackaged programs of induction, nor can they occur in programs which choose mentors or establish support systems prior to examining the individual strengths of their new teachers.

What sorts of induction experiences do the teachers from Midwest College appear to require? (How) do these differ from those of the students at Southern University? First, like their peers at Southern University, the student teachers from Midwest College also appear to require assistance in classroom management strategies. Unlike their Southern University counterparts, however, their problems of management are more general. Their classes were, for the most part, composed of heterogeneously grouped learners who delighted in testing their student teachers' untried skills. However, rather than blame the students in their classes, the Midwest College saw this as a common classroom dilemma and sought to remedy the problem through experimenting with new management strategies, which they themselves designed and implemented. They shared these strategies with each other during their student teaching seminar, which met once in the middle of the student teaching block. We hypothesize that the Midwest College teachers will require continued support of a constructivist nature in building management skills in their first year(s) of teaching. This support should capitalize on their already developing problem-solving skills and openness to collaboration with colleagues, but emphasize the need to tailor the management strategy to the individual student/class.

A second way in which the Midwest College teachers differed from their Southern University peers was in the knowledge of writing and strategies of teaching writing which they brought to their student teaching. Because their Special Methods course had been of such a brief duration, they lacked both a knowledge of the various philosophies regarding the teaching of writing, as well as the ways to enact these. However, these teachers were not uniform in their strengths and weaknesses concerning writing. For example, Sandra, who had experience as a writing tutor, knew a great deal about common problems novice writers experienced and how to remedy these, whereas her peer Sarah, had few experiences upon which to draw. Sarah's student teaching did little to increase her understanding of writing problems students face; and thus, she would require extensive support in her induction year from a mentor skilled in writing pedagogy. Sandra, in contrast, may only require encouragement to refine those skills she brings to her first year of teaching. These teachers' stories highlight the need for constructivist-oriented programs, so that their strengths may be built upon and their individual needs addressed.

Third, the Midwest College teachers had few or no experiences with teaching diverse student populations. If placed in such classrooms, they may require significant assistance in responding to the unique challenges these students provide. Finally, we suggest that those who design and implement programs of induction remember Jerome's story of wall building, described earlier—start with the stone, not with the hole. Those who bear in mind Jerome's message will look first to the individual characteristics that novices bring to their classrooms and only then create a program that will support and nurture these beginners.

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